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ABSTRACT

This document presents and explains the Institute for Experiential Learning's Standards of Excellence for Experiential Education through Internships, which were developed to generate a discussion in the higher education community on the academic standards that should serve as benchmarks for assessing the elements of good practice in internship programs. Sections 1-3 discuss the following: the standards' purpose; the various programs that would be considered experiential education; and an explanation of the standards' components. The remaining eight sections, which together constitute 75% of the document, are each devoted to one of the eight standards, which address the following issues: (1) enhancing on-campus excellence; (2) attaining institutional excellence/integrity; (3) achieving program quality through academic excellence and rigor; (4) achieving program quality through individual attention and involvement; (5) achieving program quality through appropriate internships; (6) achieving program quality through appropriate course work; (7) achieving program quality through diversity; and (8) achieving program quality through appropriate assessments. Each section includes information on the standard, its rationale, criteria for evaluating achievement of the standard, and appropriate steps for higher education institutions to take when implementing the standard. Concluding the document is a fact sheet on the Institute for Experiential Learning. (MN)

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ED 435 820

STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

FOR EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

THROUGH INTERNSHIPS

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STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

FOR EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

By: Mary Ryan

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PURPOSE

The Institute for Experiential Learning is dedicated to providing and promoting excellence in experiential education. The goal in providing the **"IEL Standards of Excellence for Experiential Education Through Internships"** is to generate a discussion in the higher education community on the academic standards that should serve as benchmarks for assessing the elements of good practice in internship programs. Standards are needed to assist institutions both in establishing their own internship programs and in evaluating off-campus internship programs to assure the quality and creditworthiness of the programs.

All too frequently, students who participate in internship programs do not receive the same quality of instruction and education as they would receive in more traditional courses. Tens of thousands of credit hours are being awarded for internships, service learning, study abroad, and prior life/learning experience. It is often difficult for staff and faculty to assess the quality of education provided and to determine if it is creditworthy.

When an institution offers experiential education programs, these programs should be evaluated with the same rigor as other academic programs. Some off-campus programs, such as study abroad, are evaluated and visited by accrediting teams. To our knowledge there is no organization that routinely evaluates off-campus internship programs. Therefore, it becomes paramount for the on-campus faculty and administrators to evaluate these programs.

Regardless of the size or the location of the program, there are common elements in every experiential education program that should be examined carefully. First and foremost, academic credit earned in experiential education programs should be comparable to the credit that is earned in other academic programs. Administrators and faculty have the obligation to make sure that the experiential education program is well-designed and well-administered and that experiential education opportunities are available to all qualified students. The adoption and implementation of policies designed to achieve these objectives are essential.

DEFINING EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

Defining experiential education is not easy. Some practitioners have contended that the field of experiential education cannot fit within the rubric of a single definition or discipline and that the nature and scope of experiential learning opportunities should be left to individual interpretations. Thus, as an academic discipline or field, experiential education currently lacks standard definitions and consequently does not provide norms for evaluating and comparing differing types of programs.

Although given many different labels, there are programs at most institutions of higher education that would be considered experiential education. Such programs include:

* Internships, part-time or full-time
* Service Learning
* Cooperative Education
* Study Abroad
* Science Labs
* Field Studies
* Practicum in teacher education, nursing, medicine, and other fields

Each of these types of programs have their own stated mission and methods of assessment for credit. However, the common thread of experiential education is that students are asked to apply what they have learned and what they know.

IEL STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE FOR EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION THROUGH INTERNSHIPS

Internships can be an important component of undergraduate and graduate education. Institutions that understand that student learning is not limited to on-campus lectures, research, reading and writing will recognize the value of providing opportunities for students to apply and articulate what they have learned in the classroom. Although institutions of higher education generally divide their academic programs into separate disciplines, the world of work tends to emphasize skills and knowledge that are interdisciplinary. Internships require that students use their prior learning and experiences and apply the knowledge to a professional setting. Students want to know what relevance their education will have once they graduate. The application of learning in an experiential setting is a powerful learning tool.

The primary objective of the Institute for Experiential Learning (IEL) is to provide undergraduate and graduate students with high quality internships in the nation's capital. IEL has developed "Standards of Excellence" that reflect the elements of a quality internship program. They are designed to provide guidance to institutions of higher education in evaluating and implementing internship programs for their students.

The standards are a way in which colleges and universities can evaluate the education and service IEL and other internship programs provide to them and ultimately to the students. They provide a framework for colleges and universities to review their participation in off-campus internship programs, as well as standards for any internship programs they establish for their students. The standards provide a starting point for examining the quality of experiential education through internships. For each standard, a **rationale** for use of the standard, as well as **criteria** for evaluating whether an internship program meets the standard, and appropriate **steps for institutions of higher education in implementing** the standard, are provided. Although the standards were developed for an internship program, many of the principles they contain will apply to other types of experiential education programs.

IEL STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE FOR EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

1. ENHANCING ON-CAMPUS EXCELLENCE

Standard

The internship program should be integrated with and enhance the college's mission and curriculum.

Rationale

In order to enhance the education of its students through an internship program, the institution of higher education must have carefully considered how the internships will complement and strengthen the academic program of students who participate.

Criteria

- The purpose and objectives of the internship program are clearly stated.
- The internship program has a mission statement which is consistent with the college's mission statement.
- The internship program meets the college's standards for awarding academic credit.

Implementation

- Provide accurate information concerning internship programs in institutional literature, including the catalog.
- Set guidelines for student selection. Screen students who can and cannot handle an internship program, taking into consideration maturity, flexibility and problem-solving skills.
- Provide financial assistance to students who need it so that the

internship programs are available to all qualified students.

- Prepare students for the internship program by providing printed material, an orientation or a course.

2. INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE / INTEGRITY

Standard

For internships away from campus, typically Washington, DC, the organization offering the internship program has an appropriate management structure, staff and policies to support the provision of a sound and high quality internship program to include: concurrent curricula, support services and housing.

Rationale

If an institution of higher education contracts with another organization to provide an internship program, it is critical to ensure that the organization is well managed and fiscally sound, employs qualified staff and faculty, and has appropriate policies for the protection of the university and its students.

Criteria

- The organization has a committed and involved Board of Directors reflective of academic values.
- The organization has an Academic Advisory Board which provides program input from college staff and faculty.
- The organization has a staff and faculty with appropriate academic credentials.
- The organization requires or provides student health insurance.
- The organization provides safe, affordable housing if requested.
- The organization has adequate organizational insurance.
- The organization has financial stability.

Implementation

- Check the degrees and experience of individuals who manage the organization and place the students, and of the faculty who offer classes and evaluate the students.
- Ask about the policies and insurance coverage carried by the program.
- Ask for a financial statement or independent audit of the program.

3. PROGRAM QUALITY: ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND RIGOR

Standard

The internship incorporates a defined project or projects resulting in outcomes and/or products of benefit to the organization and involving college-level learning on the student's part.

Rationale

Internships should be viewed as in integral part of a student's academic program and be intellectually challenging.

Criteria

- Admissions and grading policies for the internship program are similar to the institution of higher education's policies.
- The students spend sufficient time at the internship placements and in related course work to justify the award of credit.
- The internship requirements include defined cognitive tasks, the student develops proficiencies and is presented in terms of outcomes. The doing the internship and reflection on the internship become one.

Implementation

- Decide how many courses are appropriate with a full-time internship.

- Ensure outcomes based assessment for the internship.
- Ensure that all courses require sufficient reading and written assignments.
- Decide if the students will complete a capstone or senior project for credit.

4. PROGRAM QUALITY: INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION AND INVOLVEMENT

Standard

The internship program should provide individualized attention and support for students and should provide for active involvement of the student in his/her education.

Rationale

When students are involved in their own learning and in their own decision making, the process is individualized and personalized. The learning is retained for a longer period of time. Students experience ownership of decision making and learn from the process.

Criteria

- Students are involved in the internship placement process, both in developing options and in choosing among potential placements.
- Class size and teaching techniques provide ample opportunity for student participation.
- Course work provides an opportunity for student interaction.
- Faculty and staff are available to consult with students.

Implementation

- Ask if the program staff consult with the students prior to placing the students.

- Check the program's faculty to student ratio.
- Determine if the program staff have the necessary talents and skills to evaluate the student's educational needs and goals.
- Ask whether students interact in a classroom setting on at least a weekly basis.
- Ask about the availability of faculty and staff to consult with students during office hours, by appointment, or by telephone.

5. PROGRAM QUALITY: APPROPRIATE INTERNSHIPS

Standard

Internships should be designed to support the student's educational program.

Rationale

Since the internship is the vehicle through which students are provided the opportunity to apply what they have learned on campus, it is critical that the placement be designed to facilitate this educational objective.

Criteria

- Internship placements are relevant to each student's academic discipline.
- The student's supervisor at the internship placement understands the principles of supervising a student, and has agreed to act as a mentor and to provide an accurate evaluation of the student.
- The student is expected to perform as an entry-level professional.
- The student will spend sufficient time at the internship to become fully integrated into the professional environment.

Implementation

- Make sure that the program's placement procedures take into

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account each student's field of study.

- Ask if the students are given a choice of two or more potential internship placements.
- Determine whether the time spent in the internship is approximately 32 hours per week to facilitate the assignment of professional responsibilities.
- Ask whether the program informs supervisors at internship sites of the requirements and expectations of the internship program and of any home campus requirements.
- Ask if the program will change a student's placement when appropriate.
- Ask whether the program conducts ongoing evaluations of all placement sites and drops sites that do not meet program requirements.

6. PROGRAM QUALITY: APPROPRIATE COURSE WORK

Standard

The internship program should provide course work that facilitates the experiential learning process and that supports each student's academic program.

Rationale

Appropriate course work provides students with the opportunity to understand and articulate what they are learning through their internship placements, as well as providing an opportunity for interaction with other students who are sharing this experience.

Criteria

- The program provides an experiential education seminar that integrates theory and practice and provides an analytical framework for the internship.
- The program offers elective courses to provide for student learning and interaction.

- Classroom learning is based primarily on student learning goals.

- Faculty are skilled in using a variety of active learning techniques in the classroom to accommodate different learning styles.

Implementation

- Make sure that the experiential education seminar provides an understanding of learning from experience and a theoretical basis for experiential education, and encourages self-directed learning.

- Make sure that the experiential education seminar requires each student to prepare a detailed learning plan which states outcomes in terms of competencies.

- Ask if the seminar includes weekly written assignments, related reading assignments, reflection assignments, and appropriate classroom presentations.

- Review the elective courses offered to ensure they are comparable to courses offered at the institution of higher education.

7. PROGRAM QUALITY: DIVERSITY

Standard

The internship program should introduce the student to participants in the larger world of all ages and nationalities and to a variety of opinions, ideas, and philosophies.

Rationale

One of the functions of an off-campus program should be to expand the students' base of knowledge and understanding of the world.

Criteria

- The program provides for exposing the student to peers from other U.S. and international colleges and universities.

- The program provides a wide variety of opportunities to expand the students' understanding of cultural differences and to create an atmosphere of cultural appreciation.

- The program provides exposure to a broad array of ideas, taking into account the interests and backgrounds of the students.

Implementation

- Review the composition of the internship program's student body and educational/cultural offerings to make sure they are diverse.

- Ask if the program provides activities that ensure the exposure of the students to different ideas, philosophies and cultures.

- Ask if the program encourages students to take advantage of cultural and ethnic opportunities.

8. PROGRAM QUALITY: APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENTS

Standard

The student's progress and learning should be assessed based on learning outcomes, i.e., the student should be able to articulate and apply what he/she has learned. The assessment process should be ongoing throughout the semester.

Rationale

When students are able to differentiate between what they have done and what they have learned from the internship experience, the learning is re-enforced. Students who reflect upon what they have learned from the internship will be better able to retain the learning and assess their growth and development.

Criteria

- The student is evaluated on what he/she has learned, not on what he/she has done.

- Measurement of student learning, effort, and progress is both quantitative and qualitative.

- Each student's learning plan is reviewed by qualified faculty and agreed to by the student, internship supervisor, and faculty member.

- Students are required to demonstrate what they know through a learning portfolio or other comparable final project.

Implementation

- Require the program to provide documentation that its evaluation of the student is based on what the student has learned.

- Ask if there is on-going assessment and evaluation of the student.

- Ask what individuals assess the student learning. What are their qualifications?

- Ask if students complete a learning portfolio and if the students will return to campus with the portfolio for on-campus faculty review. Ask if the students make a formal classroom presentation of the learning portfolio.

- Award credit and grades for the level of learning demonstrated by the student and not the level of activity or number of hours spent at an internship.

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Wingspread Journal: "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" by Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson.

Strengthening Experiential Education Within Your Institution
Jane C. Kendall, John S. Duley, Thomas C. Little, Jane S. Permaul, and Sharon Rubin, National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1986.

Assessing Learning-Standards, Principles, & Procedures
Urban Whitaker, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, Philadelphia, PA, 1989.

Special thanks are due to the Commission on Higher Education - Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools who publishes the "Manual for Study Abroad Evaluations." This publication was the inspiration and outline for the IEL Standard of Excellence for Experiential Learning.

INSTITUTE FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

FACT SHEET

MISSION

The Institute for Experiential Learning (IEL) is a nonprofit educational organization which implements innovative, individualized, and academic-based internship programs in Washington, DC for American and international undergraduate and graduate students. Recognized as providing the "premier internship programs in Washington, DC," IEL is dedicated to providing a substantive internship experience which combines the principles of experiential learning, academic rigor, and personal and career development. Further, by fully integrating U.S. and international undergraduate and graduate students in its academic programs and housing, IEL actively fosters a lively exchange between U.S. citizens and citizens of other countries which enhances knowledge and understanding of different cultures.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

IEL offers a fifteen-week internship program during the fall and spring semesters and a ten-week program in the summer. Students work at their placement site four days per week, and on the fifth day participate in two academic seminars taught by IEL faculty. As part of the program, students complete a "Learning Portfolio" of their achievements which they can use both for academic credit and as evidence of work experience to show to prospective employers. Students generally earn academic credit for the internship experience.

In addition, IEL provides custom-designed educational short courses for colleges and universities. The short courses are generally one to three weeks in length.

ORIGIN

IEL was created to meet the growing need for developing knowledge and understanding of experiential education and to provide practical learning

experiences and substantive internships in Washington, D.C.

IEL functions under the guidance of a Board of Directors whose members are knowledgeable about higher education in the United States and abroad.

SERVICES OFFERED

The Institute for Experiential Learning:

* offers 10-15 week internship programs for students and professionals
* provides individually designed educational programs for clients
* develops integrated educational programs which emphasize the individual learner

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Institute is supported by fees which cover the operating expenses.

EXAMPLES OF CLIENTS SERVED

Over 75 U.S. colleges and universities have cooperated with IEL to provide substantive, academic-oriented internships for their students.

The International Business School of Sweden sends students to IEL for one-year certificate programs in International Marketing, Public Relations, and Journalism. The program is accredited by Shenandoah University of Winchester, Virginia.

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